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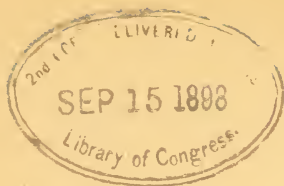
THE STORY OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON

FOR YOUNG
READERS

BY...
ALMA HOLMAN BURTON



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THE STORY
OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON
FOR YOUNG READERS

By ALMA HOLMAN BURTON



WERNER SCHOOL BOOK COMPANY

NEW YORK **CHICAGO** BOSTON

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Alexander Hamilton



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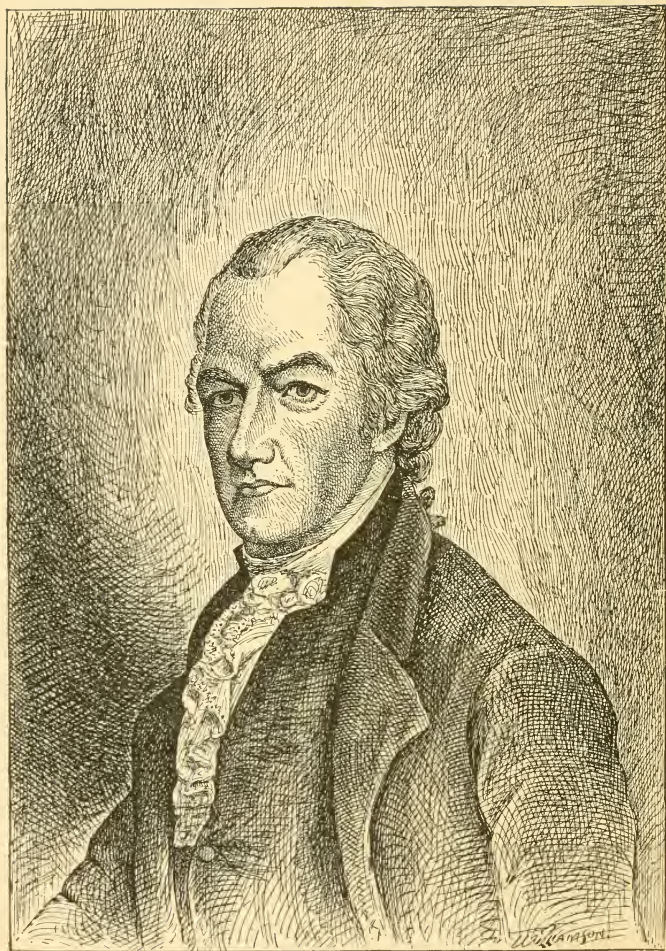
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ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE STORY OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

I.—THE ORPHAN BOY OF NEVIS.

In the British West Indies there is a little island called Nevis. The cliffs along its coast are high, and the waves beat against them day and night.

A hundred and fifty years ago there were more French than English people in Nevis; but the English were hurrying as fast as they could to occupy the island, because it was so fertile and was such a fine shipping station.

Among the merchants who went there to try their fortunes was James Hamilton. He was a Scotchman by birth. His people were distinguished, and he himself was a generous and agreeable gentleman.

Everybody liked James Hamilton; he prospered greatly in his new home, and married a beautiful French lady, and they had several children. Then the children died, one by one, until all were gone except the youngest son.

This boy was born on January 11, 1757, and he was named Alexander, after his grandfather in Scotland. He was a winsome baby; he had fine linen and silken garments, and it was said that he had an easy life before him.

Very soon, however, Alexander's father lost all his money, and could hardly keep his family from starving; but the beautiful French mother was always cheerful and gay, and tried to make the child happy. She took long walks with him in the sunshine; and when his little legs were tired with tramping over the sand, she sat down by him on the white beach and told him stories in her own French language.

One day this loving mother became very ill; then she died, and Alexander saw her carried away and buried by the side of his little brothers and sisters; but he never forgot his mother, nor the language she taught him to speak.

When he first went to school, he was so small that he stood on the table by the side of his teacher while learning the Ten Commandments. He did not go to school very long, because his father had no money to pay for his teaching.

When he was only twelve years old, he was sent to the island of Santa Cruz to clerk in the counting-house of Mr. Nicholas Cruger. There were rows of desks in the counting-house where clerks were busy writing, and iron chests where money was kept, and scales where workmen weighed bags of sugar, boxes of indigo, and bales of cotton; and outside the wide doors stood carts and wheelbarrows to carry the merchandise to the waiting ships in the harbor.

Alexander was very busy in the counting-house. He wrote down the long lists of goods for the ladings, and the dates when the ships sailed, and when they came back to port again. His master, Mr. Cruger, was a thrifty merchant. "Method is the soul of business," he often said, as he bustled about the counting-room.

Alexander did not like clerking very well; he wrote to a young friend in Nevis: "I would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station."

Those were brave words for a boy of twelve years, were they not? He would not risk his character to improve his fortune!

I think you will find that Alexander Hamilton always prized his character more than life itself.

Now, although he did not like his work, he did not shirk it. He was so diligent that, when only fourteen years old, he was left in charge of the counting-office while his employer was absent in Boston.

He was small for his age ; he must have looked like a child playing at keeping store as he went about with a quill pen over one ear, taking note of what the other clerks did. Some letters still exist which he sent to Boston, telling how the business was getting along ; they are neat and exact ; they must have pleased his employer very much.

When the duties of the day were over, Alexander studied in books which he borrowed from his friend, the Rev. Mr. Knox. He was fond of arithmetic and history, and he liked to read the lives of the great men who have helped to make the world better and happier.

Now, just about this time, a hurricane swept down upon the Leeward Islands ; ships were tossed upon the rocks by the wind, trees were torn from their roots, and villages were lifted up and

thrown into the raging sea. It was all so terrible that the bravest men fled in terror into the caves ; but Alexander was not afraid ; he watched the storm from a high ledge of rocks, and he thought it was so grand that everybody should know just how it looked ; so he wrote all about it, and sent the account to a newspaper.

When people read it, they were astonished at the language. The description of the hurricane was so beautiful that many who had hidden in the caves wished they had stayed in the open to watch it.

Who on the island could write so well ? Nobody knew. The governor set to work to find out ; and when he learned that the pale little clerk in the counting-house was the author, he said that such a bright boy should have an education.

Now, people were so eager to contribute money for this that Alexander soon had enough to pay his expenses at school for several years ; then, because there were no good schools in the island, it was decided to send him to one of the large cities in America.

And so, clad in a new suit of clothes, Alexander

Hamilton climbed the gang plank of a British packet bound for Boston. The sailors shouted; the ropes were drawn up; there were hands waving farewell, and soon the tall cliffs of the island were lost in the mists of the sea.

II.—THE VOYAGE.

When the vessel had left the land behind, Alexander began to look about him. He soon knew the sailors by name, and they all grew very fond of him. His best friend was a Scotch pilot who had been in service for many years. This old pilot told Alexander how King George of England had sent armies across the sea to help the Americans fight the French.

“Those Frenchmen wanted the earth,” he said. “They first wanted the coast of Maine, and then they wanted the beaver lands on the great river called the Ohio. And never a bit would they let the British trade for the furs of the Injuns. Every man knows that the land belonged to the king; and his majesty sent over the pick of his armies to fight for it.”

Then he told how the French forts on the Ohio had been taken by the British General Forbes and a "likely American lad" by the name of George Washington, and how the forts along the St. Lawrence had been seized by the brave General Wolfe and his army; and how, at last, the British had gained the great fresh water lakes in the north, and all the land along the Ohio.

The old man had his own ideas about the people who lived in the colonies

"I cannot well make out these Americans," he said. "They're a headstrong lot, laddie. They've made trouble from the first; and, now they've had a hand fighting the French, they're pesky ready to fall upon the king's troops sent over to keep them in order."

And while the old tar pulled away at his wheel, he told how the Americans would not consent to be taxed by Parliament; how Patrick Henry, a bold young man in Virginia, had defied the king in open meeting about a stamp tax, and how Boston and other cities had refused to buy any more goods from British merchants till the tax was taken off.

"It makes bad shipping business, laddie," he groaned; "and it's all bad from the beginning of it, and I know you'll say so yourself when you see the carryings on.

"They call themselves 'Sons of Liberty,' and have big meetings on the green, and they do a power of speaking and reading newspapers instead of smoking their pipes and keeping the peace.

"Last year, at Boston, when the king's troops stood in the streets to keep the rascals quiet, the folk came and hooted at them, and would not go home; and the troops fired the guns, and killed two or three of the men.

"And Samuel Adams, a very bold man, with the whole town at his back, ordered the king's troops out of Boston. Think of that, laddie!

"The king's officers wanted orders from the king before they put the bayonets to the throats of the villains; so they took the troops to an island in the harbor; and there they are to-day, keeping close watch on the town. I think we'll see their bayonets shining when we sail up the bay."

Alexander made up his mind that the Americans must be very wicked indeed. On the island

of Nevis, no one said a word against the great king of England who sat on a throne.

Alexander learned all he could about the Americans. He was almost afraid to go to a country where men were bold enough to defy King George's grenadiers.

The ship plunged slowly along towards his new home.

One night he heard the cry of "Fire! fire!" He ran to the hatchway. The deck was in a red glare of light. The sailors were running to and fro with buckets of water. Everybody thought the vessel would be destroyed, but at last the fire was put out.

A few days later, the ship passed an island where long lines of soldiers in red coats were marching. The bayonets gleamed in the sunshine, and the voices of the captains rang over the water as they gave their commands.

"There they are, sure enough, laddie," said the old Scotch pilot. "The king's troops are waiting, and watching the town of Boston!"

And when Alexander saw the steeples of the city, he wondered if the king's troops would ever march again into Boston with their bayonets fixed.

III.—“THE LITTLE WEST INDIAN.”

Alexander Hamilton landed at Boston on a bright day in October, 1772. He had only time to look about the docks. Then he took a packet for New York, where he intended to go to school.

When he reached New York, he hunted up some clergymen, to whom he gave letters from his friend, Mr. Knox. These gentlemen received him with much kindness, and advised him to go to the grammar school at Elizabethtown, in New Jersey.

Before very long Alexander was hard at work. He soon had many friends in Elizabethtown. Governor Livingston welcomed him to his home, and he often spent his evenings reading in the governor's library.

Once, when the baby of a lady friend died, he watched all night by the little casket. The room was lighted dimly with one candle, and as he sat alone such beautiful thoughts came to him about the dead child that he wrote them out in verse. The next morning he gave the verses to the sad mother. They comforted her very much.

At the end of one year, Alexander had been so

diligent in the grammar school that he was ready for college. He went to see the president of Princeton College. He told him he was anxious to finish his studies as soon as possible, and asked to be allowed to double the work outside of the class.

The president declared that no such thing had ever been done, but promised to talk with the officers about it. He soon wrote Alexander that it had been decided to refuse his request. "But I am convinced," he said, "that you will do honor to any seminary in which you may be educated."

Alexander returned to New York. He entered Columbia College, which was then called King's College. Here he was so witty and amiable that he made many friends. He wrote a play, which the British officers acted, and he joined a debating club where the students talked much about the troubles with the king.

Alexander remembered what the old Scotch pilot had said about the Americans, and at first he always debated on the king's side.

But one time, I do not know why, he went up to Boston. Perhaps it was to attend to some

business for his old employer at the counting-house. He found Boston in great excitement. A few nights before, the people in that city had met together to talk about the tax which Parliament had put on tea. They said they would not buy taxed tea, and that the ships in the harbor must take it back to England; but the king's governor would not send the tea back. Then some of the men dressed themselves like Indians, and hurried down to the harbor. They climbed up the sides of the ships and threw the tea overboard.

Now, the people knew very well that they would be punished for this bold act. Every night they held great public meetings. You may be sure that Alexander Hamilton attended all the meetings while he was in Boston.

He heard Samuel Adams, John Hancock, James Otis, and other patriots speak.

They said they were willing to pay taxes if they might vote like the freemen of England; but not a single American was allowed to sit in Parliament, and so Parliament had no right to tax Americans.

They said, if one tax were paid, many more must be paid; and, if the people dared to resist the law of Parliament, British troops would soon be placed in every town.

They said they were willing to obey a king, but they would not obey a tyrant.

The more Alexander listened to the talks of these great men, the more he admired them. He even found himself clapping his hands and cheering with all the rest when they cried, "No taxation without representation!"

And when he returned to New York, he would not defend the king's laws any more. He argued in debate on the side of the patriots.

He often walked under the shade of a grove of trees, talking low to himself. And when the neighbors passed by, they pointed him out and said, "There is the little West Indian, who makes such fine speeches in King's College."

IV.—"THE VINDICATOR OF CONGRESS."

Not long after young Hamilton's return to New York, news came that the king and his council

had closed the port of Boston. British soldiers had marched into the city with bayonets fixed. They would not allow an American vessel in the harbor, not even a fishing smack.

The trade of the merchants was ruined. More than half the people were without work, and hundreds would starve if food were not sent overland from the other towns on the coast.

There was great excitement in New York over this news from Boston. On a hot afternoon in July a crowd of people met on the green to talk about it.

Many spoke; but a slender boy, who sat listening, thought they had left out some very important arguments. He stepped to the front. His face was pale. He was so small that he looked like a child; yet his voice rang out clear and strong, and he spoke with so much elegance that people were amazed. "Who is he?" they asked. It was Alexander Hamilton, only seventeen years old. "Ah, the wee lad," said one; "he is bigger than he looks!"

The excitement about the taxes continued until all the colonies agreed to meet in a convention at

Philadelphia. This convention was called the Continental Congress. The delegates decided to resist the taxes to the bitter end.

Then the people were divided into two parties. Those who were willing to obey the king's unjust demands were called tories, and those who refused to obey them were called whigs.

And whigs and tories were talking from morning till night. Some New York merchants met together at the coffee-house to consider their condition.

They said that all they had was on the sea. Prosperity depended on trade, and the Continental Congress at Philadelphia must not hurt trade with England by opposing the king's laws too much. They said that everybody must be cautious.

Now, Alexander Hamilton was at this meeting. He felt that to keep up trade at the expense of liberty would destroy trade in the end, and he decided to tell the merchants what he thought.

He mounted a chair. Smiles were seen about the room. Someone said: "What brings that child here? The poor boy will disgrace himself."

But the two years in the counting-house had taught the little West Indian more about British trade than most of the merchants knew. He made one of the very best speeches of the evening. He urged sympathy with Congress, and so pleased the rich men that they shook hands with him. They said he would be a great man some day.

Now, Dr. Cooper, the president of Columbia College, was a tory, and wrote a letter in a newspaper against the Continental Congress.

Alexander Hamilton replied to Dr. Cooper with much wit. He signed his letter, "A Sincere Friend to America." The letter was well written. Everybody wanted to read it. The demand for the newspaper was so great that the printer could not publish it fast enough. "Who *is* this 'Sincere Friend to America'?" men asked on the streets.

Some said it was Governor Livingston. Others said that only John Jay, the eloquent lawyer, could have written such a fine letter. Dr. Cooper said it *must* be John Jay, and he was so angry about it that he would not speak to him on the streets.

And all the time young Hamilton was laughing to himself about their bad guessing!

Some collegians had seen the letter before it was published, and told, at last, who the "Sincere Friend to America" was. Then people admired the "Little West Indian" more than ever. They said he would some day be an honor to New York, and they called him the "Vindicator of Congress."

V.—"THE LITTLE LION."

Not long after that, a battle was fought at Lexington, near Boston.

Everybody saw that there must be a war. Congress called on all the colonies for volunteers, and appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of the American army. General Washington soon drove the British out of Boston, and hurried away to prevent them from taking New York.

Then King George sent over a great fleet with cannon and armed men. Some of the men were Hessians. They could not speak a word of English, yet they were hired by the king to fight his English subjects. This made the Americans more angry than ever. They said that a king who would do such a thing as that was not worthy of obe-

dience, and that the colonies should not be a part of England any more. The Continental Congress signed the *Declaration of Independence*, and then war with England began in real earnest.

Meanwhile, Alexander Hamilton was studying how to build forts and drill soldiers. When it was known that the British fleet was coming against New York, he joined a company of volunteers. They called themselves "Hearts of Oak," and made a very brave showing indeed in their green uniforms and leather caps, with "Freedom or Death" on the bands.

It became necessary to remove some cannon from the battery. The "Hearts of Oak" agreed to do it. As they stood on the shore, pulling and tugging at a heavy gun, the British fired at them from the ships. A comrade fell dead at Hamilton's side; but the young men stood their ground, and the gun was at last removed to safety.

Now, when the people in the city heard this firing from the British ships, they rushed into the streets, crying: "Down with the tories!" "Down with the hirelings of the king!" And one of the

first men they wanted to hang was Dr. Cooper, the president of Columbia College.

You remember that this was the tory whom Hamilton had opposed in the newspapers. Yet Hamilton knew that it would be a wicked thing to seize a defenseless man.

He was tired and heated from his work with the gun; but when he saw the angry mob surging toward the president's house, he hurried to it by a short street, and stood on the steps.

He told the people they were bringing disgrace on the name of liberty. He thought he would keep on talking in a very loud voice until the president might escape by a back door.

Dr. Cooper could not believe that Hamilton was generous enough to defend him. He thought he was down there on the front steps inciting the mob to burn his house. So he looked out of the window and called: "Don't listen to him, gentlemen; he's crazy! he's crazy!"

At last, the old scholar learned the truth, and escaped through a back door to a British man-of-war which lay in the harbor.

At another time, while the mobs were rushing to

destroy the printing presses of the tories, Hamilton again interfered. He said the rights of all citizens should be protected, and begged the frantic men to respect the law.

Soon after this, Hamilton was made captain of an artillery company.

He was very proud of his company. He spent all his money to equip his men, and trained them until they were the best soldiers in New York.

One day, as they were at drill, loading and unloading the big guns, taking them apart, putting them together again, and running with them back and forth, who should pass but Washington himself! The great general stopped at the drill ground to watch the artillery company.

He was so pleased with the bright face and the commanding tones of the little captain that he asked who he was; and then he slowly passed on, repeating to himself: "Alexander Hamilton, the 'Vindicator of Congress!'"

Another day the great commander-in-chief rode by as Hamilton was constructing some earth works at Fort Washington. He stopped his horse and watched the little engineer. And when he saw

that it was the captain who had drilled the artillery company so well, he invited him to his tent.

They had a long and delightful talk together. Young Hamilton sat on a camp stool answering questions ; he was so modest and intelligent that he quite won the heart of Washington ; and from that very day a friendship began between George Washington and Alexander Hamilton such as few men ever know. It was a friendship that lasted till death.

Some time you will read all about the war between the British and the Americans. I can only mention a few of the battles in this little book.

The king's troops seized New York. Then they followed Washington's army up the Hudson, and there were several engagements. Hamilton was always in the thickest of the fight. At Fort Washington he held the enemy back with his guns for a time ; and when they had captured the fort, he hurried into the presence of Washington and proposed to re-capture it with his company. As he stood there with his cocked hat in his hand, he looked very eager and impatient to hurry to the

task. But the prudent general thought the risk was too great, and ordered a retreat.

Hamilton soon won the name of the "Little Lion" by his boldness. He gloried in fighting for liberty. It is said that as he marched along beside his cannon, with his hand resting on the barrel, he patted and stroked it as if it were a favorite horse.

Washington kept on retreating toward Philadelphia. His army was poorly clothed and half fed and only numbered about three thousand men. Following after it came the great British army, under Cornwallis. There were over eight thousand soldiers in scarlet and gold, with banners flying and music playing; they were certain of victory.

When Washington reached the Raritan River, Cornwallis was close behind; but Hamilton planted his cannon on a high ledge of rocks above the ford of the river, and kept back the red coats until the rear of the ragged Americans was safe.

The "Little Lion" was soon rewarded for his pluck; he was appointed aide-de-camp and private

secretary to General Washington, and he was given the rank of lieutenant-colonel; that was a proud day for Alexander Hamilton.

VI.—WASHINGTON'S AIDE-DE-CAMP.

When General Washington received Colonel Hamilton into service as his private secretary, he said: "It will be a hard place to fill; I take no amusement for myself, and am busy from morning till night; I shall expect my secretary to be always at my side, ready to do his duty."

"I shall be prepared, your Excellency, to do your slightest bidding," answered Hamilton; and he kept his word. He wrote letters to the governors of the colonies for recruits, and to the commissaries for food and clothing; he wrote so much and so wisely that it was said, "The pen of the army is held by Hamilton."

He rode to Congress with secret despatches; he took orders to the different American generals, and, after a battle, he went to the camp of the British to treat for the exchange of prisoners.

General Washington trusted him completely and fondly called him "my boy."

Hamilton was then twenty years old, and Washington was forty-five.

At the battle of Brandywine, the young aide-de-camp rode to the front in the greatest danger to watch the enemy ; he carried despatches from one general to another. When his horse was shot under him, he hurried forward on foot.

After the terrible battle was over, the defeated American army retreated to Westchester. Hamilton rode all night by the side of the silent commander-in-chief. It was a sad night; the stars seemed to be mocking as they twinkled in the sky.

It was certain that, after their victory at Brandywine, the British would occupy Philadelphia ; and so, before they might reach there, Hamilton was sent to the city to ask for blankets, clothing, and food for the American army. He wrote such a charming letter to the ladies of the "Quaker City" that they gladly gave what they could, and his wagons were loaded and driven away before the drum beats of the British were heard.

Then Washington's army went into winter quarters at Valley Forge.

Now, the people who stayed at home were getting very tired of the war. Their fields were overrun by both armies, and their towns were burned by the enemy.

The British general issued a proclamation offering pardon to all who would swear allegiance to the king. He said that the property of faithful subjects would be spared, but the homes of the "rebels" should be burned to the ground.

Very many whigs were frightened into being tories; and when they had once become tories, they wanted the king's troops to conquer. They knew very well that if the Americans won, they themselves would be forever disgraced. And so they plotted to defeat them.

Then some of the American generals became jealous of Washington. They tried to remove him from command. But Hamilton was always watchful, and found out their schemes in time to prevent any harm.

Hamilton was loved by the soldiers in camp. Those who lay wounded waited for his coming,

because he knew so well how to bandage their shattered limbs, and could write such beautiful letters to their loved ones at home.

Hamilton was popular with the officers, too. He was so genial and frank that they did not envy him his high favor with the commander-in-chief.

Among the officers was the Marquis de Lafayette. He was a Frenchman of noble birth, who had given up all the pleasures of the French court at Paris to help the Americans fight for liberty. But he did not understand the English language very well. Now, Hamilton had never forgotten the French language he had learned from his mother. And so Lafayette and Hamilton became great friends, and talked much together as they sat before the camp fire at Valley Forge.

Another of Hamilton's friends was the Baron von Steuben, a German, who also talked French. The sturdy old general drilled the awkward squads of continental soldiers, and he saw with delight how eager young Hamilton was to master the rules of war.

VII.—HAMILTON THE PATRIOT, AND ARNOLD THE TRAITOR.

The war of the Revolution went on, year after year. Sometimes the Americans and sometimes the British were victorious.

After a time, the French king, Louis XVI., sent over a fleet to help the Americans.

Then the most of the British army marched to the South. They hoped that the tories and the negroes would rally to their aid.

But the British General Clinton tarried in New York. He had great plans about enlisting the French and Indians of Canada to conquer the North. "If only I might get possession of West Point!" he said.

Now, West Point was the strongest fort in the colonies. Its frowning walls guarded the Hudson River. The British general knew very well that he could not bring the armies from Canada unless he controlled the Hudson River.

It is sad to relate that General Clinton found a traitor in the American army who was willing to betray West Point for gold!

Benedict Arnold was a brilliant young soldier

from Connecticut. He was so brave that he was promoted to the rank of major-general, and, after the British had retreated from Philadelphia, he was placed in command of the city.

When Arnold married the beautiful daughter of a rich tory, he wanted to make her happy; but, as we shall see, he really made her the most miserable lady in the world.

He began to live like a prince, in the great mansion that William Penn had built. He gave balls and fine dinners, and rode in a coach-and-four. But he needed more money to live so well.

"I will take money belonging to the army," he said, "and then I will pay it back as soon as I can. No one shall ever know anything about it." So he spent the money of the army. It was easy for such a high officer to get all the money he wanted.

At last Arnold spent more than he could ever pay back. His dishonesty was discovered. He was tried in court and found guilty, but his bravery had been so great that his punishment was made as light as possible.

Arnold seemed soon to forget his disgrace. He still gave large dinners at the elegant home in Philadelphia. Perhaps his rich father-in-law gave him money for this.

After a time he begged to be appointed commander of West Point, and was placed in charge of the great fort that guarded the Hudson River. Alas! he had already plotted to betray it to the British!

At midnight, in a lonely spot, he met Major André, the agent of General Clinton. Only the stars looked down upon him as he told how the fort might be seized if the British would pay him gold.

Soon after this, while Arnold was completing his plot, General Washington came to West Point with General Lafayette and Colonel Hamilton. He sent word to Arnold that he would make him a visit. Washington was delayed by some officers, and Hamilton rode with his apology to Mrs. Arnold.

Breakfast was served. Hamilton was charmed with the wit and grace of Mrs. Arnold, but he saw that Arnold was gloomy and silent. Indeed, the traitor was very wretched. He feared Wash-

ington's unexpected visit to the fort might spoil all his plans.

While he sat toying with his fork and trying in vain to be gay, a swift messenger arrived. He whispered in the traitor's ear that Major André had been arrested and a map of West Point found in his boot.

The unhappy man excused himself from the table. He called his wife to another room. He explained to her that his fortunes were ruined, and, mounting his horse, he fled.

Hamilton lifted the fainting wife from the floor, called a servant to care for her, and then hastened to General Washington. Washington sent him with all speed to cut off the traitor's retreat; but Arnold was already safe in a British ship.

Major André was hanged as a spy. Arnold, the traitor, lived to put the torch and the sword to many towns of his native land.

"Whom shall we trust now?" asked Washington sadly, as he thought of Benedict Arnold. But we know that Washington trusted Alexander Hamilton, and we shall see that his trust was never betrayed.

VIII.—THE LAWYER.

Colonel Hamilton met and loved Elizabeth Schuyler, the daughter of General Schuyler, one of the richest men in New York. Their marriage increased the young officer's reputation and added much to his social position.

Very soon after marriage, Hamilton resigned his place as aide-de-camp to General Washington, on account of a misunderstanding. It happened in the following way: One day, Washington passed Hamilton on the stairs and said, "I would like to speak with you, Colonel."

"I will wait upon your Excellency immediately," replied Hamilton, and went below to deliver some important letters to the postman.

As he returned, General Lafayette stopped to speak with him. Hamilton was very impatient; he talked rapidly, and finally left the Frenchman abruptly. He searched for Washington in his room; he was not there.

At last he found him at the head of the stairs. The great commander-in-chief looked stately and severe.

"Colonel Hamilton," he said, "you have kept

me waiting these ten minutes! I must tell you, sir, that you treat me with disrespect."

The face of the young aide-de-camp flushed as he heard the reproving words.

"I am not conscious of it, sir," he replied; "but since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part."

"Very well, sir, if it be your choice," said Washington.

The two friends parted in anger. In less than an hour General Washington sent word to Hamilton that he hoped the misunderstanding might be forgotten. Their friendship was continued.

No doubt both men were deeply grieved over their hasty words. But Hamilton had already written out his resignation; he felt he might find a greater field for work. He was soon placed in command of a regiment, and went to the South to join General Lafayette against the British.

The war raged furiously all through the South. At last General Washington himself came from the North with his army. The British at Yorktown were surrounded by land and by sea.

A siege was begun; and then Colonel Hamilton

distinguished himself by a very daring deed. Behind a high redoubt lay the guns of the British. Washington said the guns must be taken. Hamilton was named as the leader in an assault; he placed his foot on the shoulder of a sentinel, and was the first to mount the wall; he stood for a moment in full sight of the enemy's guns, calling aloud to his men.

Then he sprang into the ditch below, followed by his devoted soldiers with bayonets fixed. He pressed on past the British sentinels, and, in nine minutes' time, the American flag was floating over the parapet. You may be sure that Washington was proud of his young friend.

Very soon after this, the British surrendered to the American troops, and the long seven years' war was over.

The British army sailed away; Washington bade farewell to his officers, and retired to his home at Mount Vernon.

Hamilton went to Albany to live. He began to study law; in a few months he was able to pass his examinations, and was admitted to the bar.

Now, before the war most of the lawyers were

tories; and after the war they were not allowed to practice in the courts. Thus it came about that Hamilton found a large field for his new profession. He soon had more cases than he could attend to.

There was only one lawyer in the state of New York who seemed to be his equal; this was Aaron Burr, a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, the great preacher of New England.

Burr was a year older than Hamilton; he was handsome and brave, and elegant in his manners.

He had been in the war, and was once a member of Washington's staff.

Washington disliked Burr, and did not keep him long in his service.

Almost everybody admired him, but very few trusted him, because he was dishonorable in his dealings with men.

It often happened that Burr and Hamilton were on different sides in a question of law. Sometimes one and sometimes the other won the case at court.

People began to say that the two young lawyers would soon be rivals in politics.

IX.—THE STATESMAN.

Not long after Hamilton began the practice of law, he was elected a member from New York to the Continental Congress. Here he did what he could.

But the old Continental Congress had served its purpose ; it had done very well for war ; it would not do for peace. There was no President ; there was no Supreme Court. Even the Congress itself was without any real authority. The little states were jealous of the big states, and the delegates were going home, one by one. Everybody said there would soon be no Congress at all.

Now, just at this very time there was more need of a strong government than ever before.

The paper dollars which Congress had issued were refused in payment of debts. People said the dollars were "not worth a continental," which meant they were not worth anything at all.

Indeed, everything continental seemed worthless. The Continental Congress had borrowed money from France, Holland, and Spain, and these countries clamored in vain for their pay.

The continental flag could not protect American commerce; the pirates in the Mediterranean Sea plundered the American ships, and British sailors boarded them; and the Spaniards at New Orleans refused to allow the Mississippi River to be navigated by Americans.

The continental army was disbanded; and when Congress taxed the states to raise some money, there were riots everywhere.

The kings of Europe began to rejoice at the distress of the Americans. "See," they said to their subjects, "see what a ridiculous spectacle a republic makes of itself! A kingdom is a firm and stable government; a republic is the rule of a mob."

England said that if the republic were only let alone it would fall to pieces of its own weight, and soon one state after another would be knocking at the door of Parliament to ask protection against her neighbors. And so King George kept his troops in the forts along the St. Lawrence. He hoped to win his colonies back again.

Hamilton urged Congress to call a convention of delegates from all the states to agree upon a better plan of government.

Now, there was so much quarreling in Congress that Hamilton could get little attention, and he soon resigned his office to practice law. But he watched and waited for the time when he might again propose a convention.

At last he was sent as a delegate to a commercial meeting at Annapolis. Here he urged his plan for a more perfect union. James Madison, of Virginia, helped him, and it was decided to ask Congress to call a convention to revise the articles of confederation.

Congress agreed to do this; and so, in May, 1787, a convention met at Philadelphia to form a permanent union between the states.

It was a noted body of men. There was George Washington, the hero of the Revolution; Robert Morris, the great merchant prince, who had almost spent his fortune that the armies might be fed; Benjamin Franklin, who had just returned from the court of the French king; Edmund Randolph, who had refused to sail away in a tory ship with his father; and James Madison, who would one day be President.

There were governors, lawyers, and merchants

among these delegates at Philadelphia, but among them all none was more ready for work than Alexander Hamilton.

He had a plan of government already formed in his own mind, and wished to persuade the rest to adopt it.

George Washington was elected president of the convention, and then the debates began.

Now, all agreed that there should be a union of the states, but there were many different opinions about what this union should be.

Some wanted a government with each state independent, except in time of war. Others wanted a government with all the states firmly united. A few, who had been made timid by the riots, declared that only a king could keep peace.

The convention lasted four months, and the debates were loud and long. Many times the meeting was almost broken up, and the talk grew so bitter that Franklin moved prayer be said every morning.

Hamilton was kept very busy. Once he spoke five hours without stopping. He proposed a strong government, with a President, a Congress, and a

Supreme Court, much as we have it now. Some day, in a larger book, you will read all about it.

In the end, the *Constitution of the United States* was written and signed. Washington's name was first on the list. The great general held his pen in his hand as he said: "Should the states reject this excellent Constitution, the probability is that an opportunity will never again offer to cancel another in peace. The next will be drawn in blood." Franklin said: "I consent, sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure it is not the best."

No one has told what Hamilton said, but we can see his name standing out, firm and clear, on the yellow parchment which lies under glass in the capitol at Washington.

After the Constitution was properly signed by the delegates, it was submitted to the old Continental Congress. The Congress agreed to let the states say whether they wished to adopt the new government.

If nine states adopted it, a union would be formed. All the states called conventions to consider the question.

X.—THE FEDERALIST.

Of course, the people were sure to disagree about the new Constitution. Governors in the states did not like to have a President who would be greater than they. Militias in the states did not want to be at the beck and call of a President who would be their commander-in-chief. Judges in the states did not care to have their decisions appealed to a supreme court. Merchants did not choose to allow a Congress to put taxes on the goods they imported from Europe.

And so there was a great deal of talking.

Those who favored the Constitution were called federalists, and those who opposed it were called anti-federalists.

Some great patriots were anti-federalists. Patrick Henry of Virginia was an anti-federalist, because he feared the President and Congress might take liberty from the people.

Samuel Adams, of Massachusetts, was an anti-federalist, because he feared one government could not hold so many states together.

Now, this old patriot had much influence.

People said Massachusetts would vote against the Constitution if Samuel Adams did.

But some workingmen met in the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston. It was their opinion that if the Constitution was not ratified their trades would be ruined. A committee bore their resolutions to Samuel Adams; and Paul Revere, who had aroused the sleeping towns for the battle of Lexington, handed him the paper.

"How many mechanics were at the Green Dragon?" asked Adams.

"More, sir, than the Green Dragon could hold," answered Paul Revere.

"And where were the rest, Mr. Revere?"

"In the streets, sir."

"And how many were in the streets?"

"More, sir, than there are stars in the sky."

And because Samuel Adams had faith in the judgment of the industrious workingmen, he resolved from that moment to be a federalist.

Nothing that anybody could say changed the mind of Governor George Clinton, of New York. He opposed the Constitution with all his might.

Alexander Hamilton urged the adoption of the Constitution. He wrote, with John Jay, of New York, and James Madison, of Virginia, a series of essays called the *Federalist*. The *Federalist* explained the new plan of government.

It had great influence all over the country. But there were so many anti-federalists in New York that people said the state would never adopt the Constitution.

There was talking from morning till night in the taverns and on the corners of the streets.

Hamilton hardly slept or ate, he was so busy trying to persuade the people to agree to the Constitution. At last news came that eight states had ratified it.

When the New York convention met to vote, there was the greatest excitement. Only one more state was needed to make the Constitution a law. Would New Hampshire vote for it? Would Virginia vote for it? Hamilton sent off couriers for reports from these two states. The days seemed very long.

At last a courier came riding at full speed. "New Hampshire has ratified!" he shouted.

"Hurrah!" answered the friends of the Constitution, and they hurried to tell that the new government was established.

Would New York join the union, or remain independent? Everybody was asking the question. Now, New York, at that time, was not so great in either wealth or population as Virginia, Massachusetts, or Pennsylvania. But the state was very important, for all that. There it lay, dividing New England from the middle and southern states. You can see very well that, if New York had stayed out of the union, she might have been a troublesome neighbor to the United States of America.

Hamilton argued in the convention while waiting for reports from Virginia. "Let others try the experiment first," said Governor Clinton and his friends. Everybody said that, if Virginia refused to ratify, New York would be sure to follow her example.

It took a long time for news to come from far away Virginia. But at last a horseman brought tidings that Virginia, the "mother of the colonies," had adopted the Constitution.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the friends of the Constitution. "What will our convention do now?" they asked.

The excitement of the crowds outside the courthouse waxed greater than ever. "Hamilton is speaking!" went from mouth to mouth. "Hamilton is speaking yet! He has changed more votes!"

And when the news was carried to the people that their convention had ratified the Constitution, a shout went up all over the state. There was a holiday to celebrate the event. Cannons boomed, bells rang, and thousands marched in line in the streets of New York city.

The portrait of Hamilton with the Constitution in his hand was carried in the parade; a small frigate, called the "Ship of State," bore the name Hamilton in large letters, and on the national flag were pictured the faces of Washington and Hamilton. The celebration closed with a public dinner, where toasts were offered in honor of Hamilton.

It was a proud day for the young federalist.

XI.—THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

The people of the United States had now much to do. There were the Congressmen to be elected in all the states, and there were electors to be chosen to name a President.

George Washington, the hero of the Revolution, was elected President.

New York was made the capital; and when Washington stood on the balcony of the city hall to take the oath of office, Hamilton stood by his side, among other distinguished men.

When Chancellor Livingston exclaimed, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States!" cocked hats were tossed in the air, handkerchiefs fluttered, and above all waved the new flag of the Union, while thousands of voices shouted that the government had begun.

Soon the President asked Robert Morris: "What is to be done about this immense war debt of the United States?"

The great financier replied: "There is but one man in the United States who can tell you, and that man is Alexander Hamilton."

And so, when Washington appointed his

Cabinet, he made Hamilton Secretary of the Treasury.

As a member of the Cabinet, Hamilton had many social duties. He assisted at the President's levees and at the Friday evening receptions of "Lady Washington." The beauty and wit of the nation were there. The envoys from Europe stood about in brilliant uniforms; and the officers of the army and of the navy were there, with their swords and medals voted by Congress. But no man in all the throng was more observed than Alexander Hamilton.

He generally wore a blue coat, a white silk waist-coat, black trousers to the knee, and long, white silk stockings. His powdered hair was combed back and tied in a cue. Although below middle size, he was erect and dignified. His brow was lofty, his face was fair, his voice was musical, and his manner was frank and cordial.

But social duties were the least of Hamilton's duties. He was to restore the public credit at home and abroad and this must be done by raising money to pay the national debt.

Yet he knew very well that, if the people

were taxed too much, they would rebel against the government.

At last he persuaded Congress to put a high tariff on imported wares, and a tax on whisky and a few other home products. Then he had to oversee the collecting of the public money, and to pay it out again on the national debt.

He proposed a National Bank, and, after much debate, the Bank of the United States was established at Philadelphia. Then he recommended a mint. There were few American coins. English, French, and Spanish coins were about all the money we had. Congress ordered a mint to melt gold, silver, and copper, and stamp it.

People began to feel very proud of their country when they read "The United States of America" on the shining pieces of money.

The nations of Europe soon treated the American flag with more respect. They said the Republic seemed like a young giant. But they said, too, that young giants stumbled more easily than anybody else. They would wait a while before they believed that the new government would be a permanent one.

Hamilton continued to labor in all the departments of his office. He suggested laws for navigation and the coasting trade. He established bureaus for the sale of the lands in the West. He founded the United States Post-office. He made a report on American manufactures, and urged a high tax on foreign manufactures to encourage the home products.

And while he was toiling day and night, enemies attacked his character. They said he had used public money to bribe men for votes. A committee investigated the treasury books, but found that every dollar was in its place.

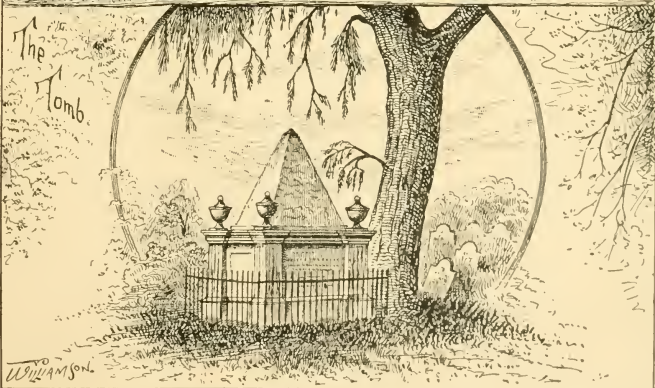
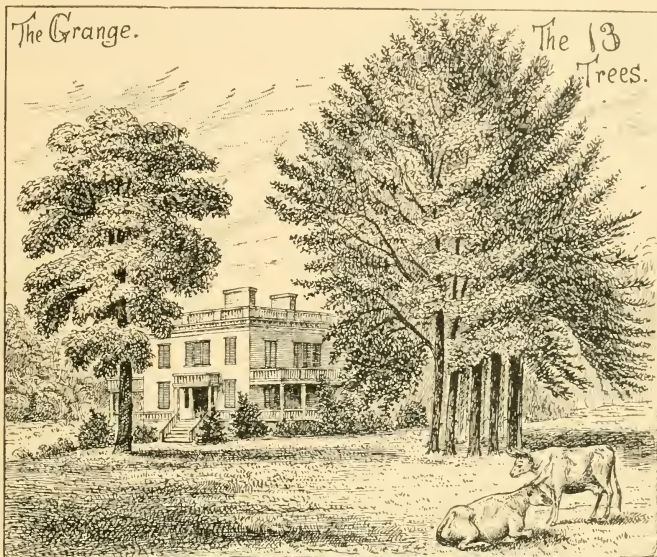
Hamilton was then more popular than ever; and when Washington was elected President for a second term, Hamilton was again chosen Secretary of the Treasury.

In 1795 he resigned his office, and resumed the practice of law in New York city. He was only thirty-eight years old, yet he had served his country for nearly twenty years, and won the name of the "founder of the public credit."

Many years after, Daniel Webster said: "Hamilton smote the rock of the national resources, and

The Grange.

The 13
Trees.



TO
WILLIAMSON.

abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of public credit, and it sprang upon its feet." Is not that high praise from a great orator to a great statesman?

XII.—INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF THE ARMY.

Hamilton was urged by his party to accept the nomination for governor of New York. He refused the honor. He preferred to practice law. He soon bought a small estate on the north end of Manhattan Island, and built a hospitable house, which he called the *Grange*, after the mansion of his grandfather in Scotland.

Here he was the center of a large circle of admiring friends. On another part of Manhattan lived Aaron Burr, his rival in politics and at the bar. Whatever Alexander Hamilton wished was sure to be opposed by Aaron Burr.

But talent and industry kept Hamilton far in the front. By his practice in the courts, he grew more famous than ever. The rich and the poor brought their troubles to the great lawyer. It is said that Washington still sought his advice in national

affairs ; and then, as the President completed his second term of office, Hamilton helped him write the Farewell Address.

If you hear this famous Farewell Address read on Washington's birthday, perhaps you will think of Alexander Hamilton.

Now, when John Adams, of Massachusetts, became President, trouble was already brewing between the United States and France.

You remember how Louis XVI. sent a fleet to America to aid in the war against the British. It so happened that, very soon after, the king had a war with his own people. He was driven from his throne, and France became a republic.

"If one throne falls," said the other kings of Europe, "all thrones may fall ; we must not let the French establish a republic as the Americans have done" ; and so the kings united to fight France. Then the Directory, which was the name of five men who ruled the new French republic, called across the sea to the Americans : "We helped you," they said, "when you fought for liberty ; come and help us."

This was a stirring appeal. Republican clubs

were formed all over the United States ; they sang French songs and dressed after the French fashion. But while Washington was President, he had hesitated to take up arms against England ; he said the only two English-speaking nations on the globe should be friends.

It seemed unwise to take part in the quarrels of Europe. Besides, it was King Louis who sent help to America, and the French mobs had cut off the head of King Louis. Washington declared the United States would take no part in the wars of France.

When John Adams became President, he, too, said we should remain friends to all the nations of Europe. Then the French became very disagreeable ; they began to shoot at the flags on our ships. President Adams sent agents to Paris to try to arrange the difficulties ; but the French Directory insulted the agents, and ordered them out of the city. Of course, *all* the Americans were angry then. The Republican clubs took off their French badges, and quit singing French songs.

The President and Congress prepared for war. Washington was appointed lieutenant-general of

the army, with Hamilton his first major-general. Ships were built ; armies were collected and drilled. There was hurrying everywhere. Meantime, Napoleon had become the ruler in France; and when he saw that the Americans were so eager to defend their honor, he treated them with more respect. After a time, peace was made between France and the United States.

Before peace had been concluded, the death of Washington caused mourning throughout the land. Hamilton became commander of the American armies, but he went about his duties with a very sad heart.

XIII.—ALEXANDER HAMILTON AND AARON BURR.

When all danger of war was over, Hamilton began again to practice law.

He withdrew more and more from public life. It is said that in the trial of his cases the great lawyer was almost always successful.

Sometimes he spoke many hours, but no one wished to leave the court-room until he had finished his speech.

Now, all this time Aaron Burr had been rising in power. He was crafty and revengeful; he did what he could to blacken the character of Hamilton. When the term of John Adams drew to a close, Aaron Burr became a candidate for President against Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia.

Hamilton used his great influence against the election of Burr. He thought him a man without honor, and therefore unfit for the high office to which he aspired.

When Jefferson was elected, Burr was very angry; he said that Hamilton had caused his defeat.

Then, when Burr wished to be governor of New York, he was defeated again. He was more angry than ever; he laid all the blame of failure on Hamilton; he brooded over his evil thoughts.

How might he get rid of this powerful man who stood in his way? He decided to kill him; but he said he would not, like a common murderer, kill him in the night; he would challenge him to fight a duel.

It is said that Burr trained his hand at shooting targets until he never missed his mark. When

he was sure that he would not fail he sent a challenge to Hamilton.

In those days a duel was a common way to settle disputes. Hamilton had lost a dear son in a duel. He thought the custom of dueling was wrong ; yet he knew very well that, if he did not accept the challenge, he would be called a coward.

"If war should ever break out again," he said, "who would trust a man in command, if he had ever been called a coward?"

And so he accepted Burr's challenge, but he asked that the duel be put off until he had finished his cases in that term of court. He did not wish others to suffer loss if he died.

The days went by ; the great lawyer pleaded his cases, and attended to all his duties as usual.

Once, at a public dinner, when urged to sing his favorite song, he arose to his feet and sang the patriotic verses, one by one.

Just across the table sat Aaron Burr. His eyes were fixed on the glowing face of the singer. He whispered to himself : " It is the last time that the people of this nation shall listen to the voice of Alexander Hamilton."

XIV.—THE DUEL.

At dawn, on the eleventh day of July, 1804, the duel took place. The two men, with their seconds, met on the Jersey shore at Weehawken, opposite New York. Hamilton had said he would not fire the first round; he did not wish to kill his enemy. They measured paces. At the given word, Burr fired. Hamilton fell. Burr hastened away in a boat. He was soon condemned as a murderer, and fled for his life.

Hamilton was carried to his barge. He was placed on a cot, and borne to the house of a friend. A long line of citizens followed the almost lifeless body. They wept and wrung their hands. All felt that he must die. His wife and children were summoned; and, in a few hours, Alexander Hamilton breathed his last.

On the day of his funeral the business houses in New York City were closed. The flags on the ships in the harbor were hung at half-mast, and the bells of the churches were muffled and tolled.

A vast procession followed the hero to his grave. His war horse, with empty saddle, draped in black, walked behind the casket. Then came

regiments of soldiers. Then the president and the students of Columbia College marched together, because the "orphan boy of Nevis" had been an honored student of Columbia College, when it was King's College. Behind the students marched the many societies, who wished to do honor to the dead; and all over the country there was mourning for the great financier, the soldier, the lawyer, and the statesman, Alexander Hamilton.

Ministers in their pulpits deplored his loss. One said: "Alexander Hamilton was a man on whom nature seemed to impress the stamp of greatness.

"He was the *hero* whose first appearance in the field conciliated the esteem of Washington; the *statesman* whose genius impressed itself upon the constitution of his country; the *patriot* whose integrity baffled the closest scrutiny, and the *counsellor* who was at once the pride of the bar and the admiration of the court.

"The name of Hamilton raises in the mind the idea of whatever is great, whatever is splendid, whatever is illustrious in human nature.

"Wherever Alexander Hamilton was, the friend-

less had a friend, the fatherless a father, and the poor man an advocate."

The newspapers were banded in black. Each paid loving tribute to the dead. Even those that had often opposed him hastened now to praise him.

"Americans!" said the *Charleston Courier*, "in Alexander Hamilton, you have lost your champion, your counsellor, and your guide.

"Who is there in the ancient or the modern world that has surpassed him? If we look to his life, we shall find more to praise and less to censure than in almost any other.

"The head that guided your guides—that clearest head that ever conceived, and that sweetest tongue that ever uttered, the dictates of wisdom—lies mouldering to clay; yet the deeds this great man wrought will live forever."

"The name of Hamilton will not die," said one newspaper, "until that dark day shall come when the name of Washington will also be remembered no more."

"No country ever deplored a greater man," said another.

"Behold!" said another, "a Washington and a Hamilton meet again in gladness and triumph."

The dust of the illustrious statesman lies in Trinity Churchyard, at the head of busy Wall Street. On a bluff of Manhattan stands the "Grange," once his country home, removed a short distance from where it then stood. But the thirteen trees still flourish where he planted them in remembrance of the thirteen states he had helped to unite into one great nation.

They tower high above the trees around them. It was thus, too, that the fame of Alexander Hamilton arose above that of other men.

Like Cain, who slew his brother, Aaron Burr, who slew America's greatest statesman, became a wanderer on the earth. The name of Hamilton sounded in his ears wherever he went.

"Ah, the slayer of *Hamilton!*" exclaimed an English lord, and coolly turned his back.

"I always have a miniature of *Hamilton* hanging over my mantle piece," replied a French statesman whose favor he sought.

"By the death of *Hamilton* you have forfeited

the right of citizenship," said a consul as he refused him passports.

Wearied with his treatment in Europe, Burr returned to New York city.

His old friends shunned him and strangers who heard his name refused to clasp his hand.

At last, when very old and very poor, he died; and the event served only to renew the universal praise of Alexander Hamilton.







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